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FOOD INFORMATION

Office of Information  
U. S. Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D. C.



June

Farm Labor Campaign

No. 19

Local Communities Meet the Farm Labor Problem  
(A few current examples\*)

THE CROPS are going in. Labor is being found to harvest vegetables and other early crops. With farmers getting help locally from thousands of school children, women, businessmen, and some outside workers, the U. S. Crop Corps is fast becoming a working army on the farm and in canning plants.

FARM LABOR NEEDS have been brought together county by county and plans laid to recruit the extra workers to meet those needs. Hundreds of local mobilization committees are helping Extension agents, the U. S. Employment Service, the OCD, the schools, and other groups recruit needed rush-season and full-time workers. Plans have been made in thousands of other communities for local mobilization of all possible labor as the harvest season advances.

VOLUNTEERS SAVE CROPS: Strawberry crops have been saved the last few weeks, and tons of beans, asparagus, potatoes, and other early crops harvested by Crop Corps workers. Other groups helped set tomato plants, thin beets, chop cotton, hoe grass, and weed out growing crops. Thousands of extra workers have been recruited in the Midwestern flood area where almost everything must be cleaned and repaired and much of a season's planting must be done almost overnight before it is too late to plant. Here are a few current examples:

IN THE FLOOD AREA - In the six States in the Midwestern flood area, where about 3,500,000 acres of rich cropland was flooded, a battle to get those acres back into vital food crops is under way.

Neighbors are pooling machinery and labor, working on the uplands first, then moving on to the bottom lands as they dry out. As many as 26 tractors and crews have been reported working in one field at one time. Many tractors are going night and day.

At Vincennes, Ind., 325 high school boys and girls who volunteered were let out of school about June 1 to weed tomato fields, some of them after setting the plants because of the flood rush.

\* Further details about any of these examples can be obtained locally through county agricultural agents, through State extension editors, or the Extension Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

At Lincoln, Ill., 77 men with farm experience who were willing to work on flooded farms after office hours and on week ends responded to a house-to-house canvass by city businessmen..

In one Illinois county city workers, recruited with the aid of a sound truck, saved the strawberry crop ahead of the floodwaters. A second truck followed the sound truck and took the volunteer workers straight to the strawberry fields.

Oklahoma reports that a large number of city businessmen are helping repair flood-damaged buildings and fences and assisting in rush crop planting. Many of them are paying their own transportation to the farm and making no charge for their help.

ALABAMA - About May 1 481 nonfarm high school boys from 20 towns started work helping harvest and pack Baldwin County's 5,000-car Irish potato crop. They will work for 6 or 7 weeks. -Alabama Extension Service reports the boys doing an excellent job, the boys and the farmers pleased.

CONNECTICUT - Near Bolton a big strawberry crop must be picked between June 15 and July 15. A camp of 140 girls is being set up to meet the need. At nearby Southington a camp is being set up for 30 girls who have joined the Women's Land Army and will work on vegetable farms all summer. At Litchfield another group of 17 girls will do orchard work from June 15 to August 15.

DELAWARE - At Bridgeville 50 Boy "Scouts from Wilmington spent the last 2 weeks of May in a Scout camp and cut about 100 acres of asparagus every morning. They worked about 5 hours a day; work and recreation were under Scout leaders. They got 40 cents an hour, the same as adult workers, and Harry Cannon, the farmer for whom they worked, says they did as much and as good work as the adults. They have gone back to school now, and another group of 50 Scouts is taking their place on the farm. In Newcastle County 151 school boys and girls made short work of setting 175 acres of tomato plants, stayed out of school 2 days, and did the job as a group.

ILLINOIS - Plans are under way to recruit and place 90,000 Crop Corp workers to meet the needs that Illinois farmers have reported to county agents. Intensive recruitment campaign will be conducted in about 900 towns and cities. About 3,000 nonfarm boys and girls are already enrolled in farm work training classes and will be placed when school is out to help on general farms. Another 15,000 will be needed to help with seasonal harvest work.

Farm workers from southern Illinois who obtained jobs as year-round hired hands on farms to the north in the State through the War Food Administration's year-round farm labor program are earning and producing where they are needed. One man was given 30 days to find essential farm employment by his draft board and located a job through the program; another man left his son to farm their small southern farm while he worked on a larger northern one; a third had just been laid off of completed defense construction work; and another had just been let off from WPA as a result of its liquidation.



INDIANA - A house-to-house canvass in Franklin and other Johnson County towns to get emergency farm workers late in May resulted in 226 persons signing up to help set tomato plants, 153 to harvest sweet corn, 186 to help with hay and wheat harvest, 222 to help pick tomatoes, and 140 to pack fruit. These workers are being placed on farms by the county agent, and plans are in full swing to recruit about 2,200 more Crop Corps workers that will be needed in the county.

IOWA - It's "pass the ammunition" for two ministers in Dallas Center, Iowa, but this time their weapons are tractors and farm tools. Rev. J. S. Cook, First Brethren Church pastor, has worked 600 hours on Lawrence Baldner's farm since the hired man left last fall, disking, plowing, building fences, planting crops, etc. D. D. Fleichman, a fellow minister, is also helping. "Giddap," he says, "I may quit a little early tonight because of prayer meeting." Not far away a hardware store dealer, R. B. Stillsworth, closes shop at 6 p.m., drives to a nearby farm, and hops on a tractor to help take care of 600 acres. Such stories about bankers and businessmen pitching in and helping are not unusual anymore.

In Story County farmers have reported to the county agricultural agent that they need 200 extra workers in the vegetable fields and canning plants, and to detassel hybrid corn. Local business and club groups are now helping make a 10-day drive to register workers. Every house in the county's 19 cities and towns is being canvassed. They hope to have workers to handle 300-acre pea crop ready June 15, and other crops later. If the drive does not get enough workers, stores and offices will be asked to close part time during rush harvest seasons so that all can help. The Commercial Club, civic clubs, Women's Club, local Defense Council, USES, AAA, Farm Bureau, schools, and other groups are cooperating with the county agent and the local farm labor committee. The group is confident outside labor will not have to be requested.

KANSAS - Sparked by Governor Schoeppel, Kansas has set out to mobilize and train 35,000 farm workers for this season. At Dodge City several hundred men, mostly retired farmers, were recruited to help with farm work. On farms near Hutchinson, 400 nonfarm boys are helping harvest wheat. In Seward County one farmer has two men and four girls helping him this year, instead of the usual six hired men.

KENTUCKY - Through May 22 more than 1,900 workers from southeastern Kentucky, where the average annual farm income is approximately \$60 a year, were transported by the Department of Agriculture to labor-short dairy and general farms in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and other Northeastern States to work as year-round hired hands. The majority of them received "brush-up" courses in up-to-date farming methods before being placed on the more productive farms which needed their help for capacity production of Food for Freedom.

Ed Hubbs, of Whitley County, Ky., last year sold off his farm and equipment for \$300 and had to work in the coal mines near his home to make a living. When he learned that highly productive land in Ohio might fall off in output of war-vital food because of a shortage of labor, the War Food Administration helped place him on one of those farms as a year-round hand. Employed by

George Abbott, of Medina County, Ohio, he is receiving \$840 a year cash income, the upper apartment of a new duplex home, with gas, electricity and bath for himself, his wife, and child, and an adequate supply of milk, wood for fuel, one-fourth of a beef, and eggs at half the market price. Mr. Abbott has one other Kentucky family and has applied for a third.

LOUISIANA - High school boys and girls in six southern Louisiana parishes have saved tons of beans and potatoes during the last month. Much of the 300,000-acre crop of early potatoes and 10,000 acres of beans would have rotted in the field but for their help. They joined the Crop Corps and went to school on Saturdays so they could get out by May 15 to help in the rush of the harvest.

MAINE - More than 100 college girls have signed up to do farm work as soon as the college term is over.

MARYLAND - Two hundred Washington, D. C., schoolboys spent Saturday, June 5, on a nearby Maryland farm. They will spend the next three Saturdays that way getting training and getting into condition for farm work. When school is out, they will spend the summer in four farm labor camps and work on nearby farms.

MICHIGAN - More than 3,000 Michigan farmers are already receiving help from workers in the Crop Corps. Much more is promised, including some 3,000 high school youths who have enrolled to help when school is out. Three hundred and fifty Crop Corps placement centers have been established.

MISSOURI - Workers flocked from seemingly everywhere in late April and May to save a big strawberry crop in five southwest Missouri counties. Businessmen from Joplin and Springfield, 100 Boy Scouts from nearby Kansas, American Legion Volunteers, garage men and other city laborers who took time off or worked after hours in the fields; all together met the need for 6,000 extra workers. Cotton chopping is the big job in June in these counties, and 1,700 extra workers are being recruited in like manner.

Nearly 1,000 farmers in the Ozark Mountain region, not too busy now, have been moved during the last 4 months into central and northern Missouri and southern Indiana to help with pressing farm work. They were assisted in moving by the Farm Security Administration and the Extension Service.

NEW YORK - Setting out to beat last year's record of 19,000 high school youths who worked on farms, New York State opened eight farm work centers, each with about 25 or more boys from New York City and other cities and towns.

Twelve Women's Land Army registration centers have been opened in New York City, the AWVS, the OCD, and the USES cooperating. Volunteers will be given training at nearby schools and placed by county extension agents on northeastern farms. At Farmingdale, L. I., 34 women have completed a farm work course and are now working on New York and Connecticut farms. Another 4 weeks' course is in progress.



OHIO - The first community church at Grandview, near Columbus, will shortly start a labor camp, with 50 boys and girls from its young people. They'll use an old resort hotel, church cooking utensils, and will pick berries and cherries, thin peaches, and weed crops during July and August.

At the State University, Columbus, 50 YWCA girls plan to spend 10 weeks this summer on farms in Erie County, thinning peaches, picking fruit, vegetables, etc. They will stay in an old school building. Each girl will pay \$15 to an instructor and will study evenings.

About 40 Jewish boys and girls will start work June 23 near Painesville, living in a farm work camp sponsored by the local YMEA.

In Montgomery County plans have been made for 200 Boy Scouts with their own camping equipment and supervisors to do emergency farm work this summer.

At Carroll, Ohio, Boy Scouts agreed to detassel hybrid seed corn for Clifford T. Cauffman, a local grower, and on the strength of it, he is planting 125 acres this year compared to 93 last year. They will live in camp, and be supervised by a local football coach.

TENNESSEE - More than 3,000 extra workers, school children, women, businessmen, from 7 nearby counties joined 2,000 local pickers in Sumner County in late May to save a million-gallon strawberry crop from threatened rain. Three days of rain at the height of the 15-day picking season, along with the shortage of workers, brought on the crisis. The county extension agent and the U. S. Employment Service mobilized the workers and helped arrange for transportation. Truck after truck unloaded 20, 40, or more workers at the proper fields, where according to plans they went right to work. Sixty-three 4-H Club boys came in from Davidson County. Cheatham County sent 72 home demonstration club members and 150 4-Hers. Robertson County sent 700 workers; Wilson County, 50. About 35,000 man days of labor went into saving the crop.

In like manner a labor crisis was met early in June in harvesting a 600-acre crop of peas in Monroe County, by labor swapping among neighbors, help of city people, 4-H Club members, and 50 men in 4-F draft classification with farm experience who responded to a call for help.

A 6,000-acre crop of snap beans in Johnson County will be ready to begin harvesting about July 15, and similar recruitment plans are being speeded to get the 2,600 to 3,000 extra pickers that will be needed to pick the record crop.

WEST VIRGINIA - First group of 70 nonfarm schoolboys from a dozen West Virginia counties are now receiving farm work training at the Tucker County farm training center near Parsons. Shortly after June 15 they will be placed on farms, hundreds like them to follow, over the State.

FOREIGNERS HELP TOO - As of May 22 a total of 20,455 Mexican nationals, 2,517 Bahamians, and 5,294 Jamaicans had been transported to United States farms for seasonal farm work under international agreement. Mexicans were crossing the border at the rate of 2,000 every 3 days. The first 3,000

Mexicans were placed in California sugar beet fields last fall. Others are employed in Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, Montana, South Dakota, Idaho, and Washington. The Bahamians are at work in Florida, Delaware, and Maryland. The Jamaicans are working in Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Idaho.

FARMERS ARE DOING their part too, pooling equipment and labor, working long hours, training new workers, using short-cut methods and ingenious labor-saving devices. Their spirit is expressed by one Oklahoma farmer; whose buildings, 79 acres of crops, feed, and equipment went down the river in the recent flood, who said: "I'm ready to go back just as soon as possible, for farming is all I know, and we need the food so badly this year for our armed forces."

Farm women in Weld County, Colo., who last spring took a farm machinery class, are surprising their husbands with their skill and efficiency in handling tractors and other machinery.

A new concrete feeding floor and automatic hog waterer is saving labor for H. G. Folkert, Steamboat, Iowa. Another Iowa farmer has rigged up a portable granary on an old threshing machine he can move to where the animals are.

And so goes the story in community after community; the story of local people working together to plant and save the crops; to do a job that must be done. Any of these brief items and hundreds like them over the country are full stories within themselves.

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